



# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

A woman's prepregnancy weight is related to her weight gain during pregnancy (gestational weight gain). This is important because her gestational weight gain, especially during the second and third trimesters, is related to fetal growth. Recommended ranges for weight gain during pregnancy have been established that take into account maternal prepregnancy weight and height. Gestational weight gains below recommended levels are associated with intrauterine growth retardation and perinatal mortality. Gestational weight gains above recommended levels are associated with high birth weight, which leads to prolonged and/or difficult labor, birth trauma, and fetal asphyxia. Prior to this survey, no population-based data were available to assess the prevalence of inappropriate weight gain during pregnancy.

The 1997 California Women's Health Survey asked women questions about their height, weight, and weight gain during their last pregnancy. Gestational weight gain was assessed for women (N=656) who reported being pregnant within the last five years. Body Mass Index (BMI) is a relationship between height and

weight. The respondents' BMIs were classified into four weight-for-height groups:<sup>1</sup> "Underweight," "Normal," "Overweight," and "Obese." In relation to the respondents' BMI, pregnancy weight gains were evaluated in comparison to their recommended weight gain range: "Under Range," "Within Range," or "Over Range." For obese women, there is not a recommended weight gain range, but a cutoff point. Weight gain above this point is believed to be potentially harmful to the mother and/or fetus. Weight gain above the cutoff point was classified as "Over Range."

- Fewer than half the respondents (41%) reported gaining weight within their target range.
- 32% of the respondents gained weight below their target range.
- 27% of the respondents gained weight above their target range.
- Respondents classified as "Underweight" or "Normal" reported the highest percentages of weight gain below their target ranges (41% and 49%).
- Respondents classified as "Overweight" and "Obese" reported the highest percentage of weight gain above their target ranges (50% and 78%).

## GESTATIONAL WEIGHT GAIN

### Maternal and Child Health Branch

#### Public Health Message:

*Fewer than half of the women reported a weight gain within their recommended range. Women with inappropriate weight gains have either an increased risk for perinatal mortality (below range) or birthing problems (above range). These findings suggest that among pregnant women, inappropriate weight gain is a much more common problem than previously recognized.*

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<sup>1</sup> Subcommittee on Nutritional Status and Weight Gain During Pregnancy. Institute of Medicine. Nutrition During Pregnancy. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1990.

